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SUBJECT: UNGA FOURTH COMMITTEE DECIDES TO DEFER ADOPTION OF "UN AFFAIRS" JOURNAL

¶1. On November 5, the Fourth Committee held a plenary session to take action on draft resolutions A and B, amendment A/C.4/63/L.8 and draft decisions as contained in document A/63/21 regarding agenda item "questions relating to information."

¶2. During the spring 2008 session of the Committee on Information (COI), the Department of Public Information (DPI) requested that Member States consider changing the UN Chronicle, a UN news publication, to an "academic journal" called "UN Affairs." The COI agreed to consider DPI's proposal once DPI could provide to Member States detailed information and a pilot copy of "UN Affairs." At a resumed session of the COI in September 2008, a pilot copy and oral report were provided to Member States. At this session, USDel raised concerns about the budgetary implications from changing to "UN Affairs." In response, the Under-Secretary-General (USYG) of DPI Kiyo Akasaka and the Director of Publication Eric Falt argued that DPI would not be requesting additional funds to create the new journal.

¶3. During the month of October, members of the COI negotiated informally. Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the G77 and China, France on behalf of the EU, Japan, Russia, and USDel considered adding additional language to the draft resolution as contained in Chapter IV of the COI report A/63/21. The French were supportive of the move since the journal would be published in both French and English. The G77 and China, however, were concerned that the new journal would not be originally published in all six official languages. The G77 was also very concerned about the editorial policy that would drive "UN Affairs" articles. USDel expressed concern regarding adoption of an editorial policy. Japan and USDel wanted to ensure that no budgetary implications would occur in light of the new journal. After tough negotiations, Member States were able to agree upon language deferring consideration of the "UN Affairs" journal to the next COI in 2009. In this language, Member States requested the Secretary-General to provide additional information to the COI in 2009 about the journal's editorial policy, publication in the six official languages, and potential improvements from the UN Chronicle while emphasizing fiscal responsibility. Moreover, with the help of the French delegation, USDel was able to secure an on-the-record statement from USYG Akasaka, reiterating that it was not his intention to request additional funds for the creation of "UN Affairs." This statement is noted in Footnote 1 in the resolution (see para. 5).

¶4. On November 5, before taking action on the draft resolution, Antigua and Barbuda took the floor in the Fourth Committee on behalf of the G77 and China to summarize the amendments and state that the Group was ready to adopt the amended draft by consensus. No other delegations took the floor at this time and the Chairman moved to take action on the draft resolution. Draft resolution A and B as amended was passed by consensus in the Fourth Committee (see para. 5). Afterwards, Antigua and Barbuda once again took the floor on behalf of the G77 and China, reiterating the Group's emphasis on the importance of achieving parity of languages

and a proper editorial policy for the journal.

¶5. The draft resolution B in Chapter IV of the COI report A/63/21 was approved with the addition of the following paragraphs:

77bis. Considers it necessary for the Department of Public Information to clearly identify practical improvements intended by the change from the UN Chronicle to "UN Affairs," taking into account parity of languages, editorial policy, potential qualitative gains and other improvements and urges the Department of Public Information, that while considering these aspects, emphasis be placed on cost-effective measures and the present budgetary constraints, and welcomes any other alternative in line with the mandate of the Department of Public Information for the consideration of Member States; (footnote 1)

77ter. Requests the Department of Public Information to continue the UN Chronicle until a decision is taken on "UN Affairs" or any other alternative in line with the mandate of the Department of Public Information;

Footnote 1: At the meeting of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee, held on 22 October 2008, the Under-Secretary-General for Communication and Public Information stated that, in the light of the current budgetary situation, it was his intention not to ask for additional resources.

Khalilzad